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EUROPEAN ARCHIVES¹

I AM asked to tell you something about European archives—a vast subject for a twenty-minute talk. What I know about European archives is a much smaller theme; yet even that will bear cutting. Precluded from the outset is the method of that masterly study in which a half dozen years ago an American scholar gave to the world its best account of the archives of the Vatican.² May we have more such papers. But such must deal with European archives singly. Be it mine in homelier fashion to acquaint you with them all. So broad a treatment must begin with the rudiments. Will you pardon me, then, if, forgetting the riper scholars before me, I address myself for a little to those who know of the archives of Europe no more than did I not so very long ago?

First of all: Archives are *not* to manuscripts—as I, at least, once supposed—what libraries are to printed books. Book manuscripts—chronicles, journals, all that has literary form or substance—belong, like printed books, to libraries. In archives seek only documents, *i. e.*, official and legal papers: edicts, treaties, charters, writs, wills, deeds, minutes, registers, yes and official correspondence. But not all documents. Look not there for those of current history. Such cannot yet leave the keeping of their authors or owners. Only when the transactions they record are closed, and the secrets they contain can safely be shared, will they be merged in the archives. The depositories in which they meanwhile rest—if they belong to the bureaus of a government—are technically known as *registratures*, and are not open to the public. Thus, in England, diplomatic correspondence prior to 1850 may be sought in the national archives—the Public Record Office; but only that previous to 1760 may be seen without special permission from His Majesty's Secretary of State, while all that of later date than 1850 remains still in the jealous custody of the Foreign Office. So, in France, the hesitant ministry of Foreign Affairs at last lays freely before the public (though in its own archives) all antedating

¹ A paper read at the meeting of the American Historical Association (December, 1901). Despite its somewhat colloquial form, I have preferred to print it (save for one or two minute corrections) precisely as delivered, adding only a few foot-notes to indicate its printed sources or to suggest where further information may be found.

² The allusion is, of course, to Professor Haskins, whose study on *The Vatican Archives* was printed in the *AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW* for October, 1896.

September 14, 1791, and with restrictions all to May 30, 1814; but nothing later. In Italy they will show you documents to 1815; in Holland to 1813; in Denmark only to 1750.¹

Not the newest documents, then, are in the archives. But not the oldest either. Archives there have been, indeed, almost from the dawn of history. Egyptians, Assyrians, Medes, Hebrews, Phœnicians, Greeks, Romans, all, as we know, had their documents and their depositories for them—temple or palace or archive building; but all these archives were long ago ruined or scattered. Such remnants as are ours must be sought in libraries or in museums. To modern archives they have left nothing but their name and the fruitful tradition of their methods. The new Germanic kingdoms of the west, Goth and Lombard and Frank, Meroving and Karling, had too their archives, aping in such crude fashion as they could their Roman models; but these are likewise gone without a trace, a prey to inroad and to feudal chaos. If to-day in the museum-room of the French national archives there are displayed with pride the papyrus charters of Merovingian kings, it is not that there they were preserved. They owe their safety to quite another asylum.²

For, happily, one place of refuge baffled even the fury and the neglect of the Dark Ages. It was to church and to abbey that even secular princes turned for the shelter of their records; and all that is left us of the documents of the earlier medieval centuries we owe to them. The oldest archives of Europe are those of the Church, and the oldest of all those of the bishops of Rome. From the fourth century, at least, their existence is certain. Yet even here, as Professor Haskins has told us, what is left from the early Middle Ages is only a gleanings. The extant continuous records begin only with Pope Innocent III., at the end of the twelfth century. If this be true of Rome, how much more of the lesser centers of ecclesiastical life. For centuries almost nothing is left us save title-deeds to property—the record of pious donations and of the prayers which were their meed—with here and there perhaps a scrap of ecclesiastical legislation.

¹ Yet it is rash to name these limits positively. With the bettering of good faith in international intercourse and with the growing conviction that the truth is less damaging than the suspicions bred by concealment, these restrictions are constantly being cut down. The statement as to England, corrected from my address as delivered, I have from the Record Office itself, under date of April 28, 1902. For the permission of the Secretary of State any other than British subjects must apply through their diplomatic representative.

² For the following sketch of the rise of European archives I am especially indebted to Franz von Löher's *Archivlehre* (Paderborn, 1890), to H. Bresslau's *Handbuch der Urkundenlehre für Deutschland und Italien*, I (Leipzig, 1889), and to the excellent article on "Archives" by Arthur Giry in the *Grande Encyclopédie*.

Civil archives passed out of thought. The Holy Roman Empire itself, in spite of imperial traditions and of the pattern of her papal rival, was for centuries content with such store of public records as her migrant emperors and their clerkly chancellors could drag with them from place to place. Of "archives of the Empire," there begins to be mention just at the middle of the twelfth century,¹ but the phrase is puzzling, and, according to our best authority on imperial diplomatics, it was not till when, a half century later, the Hohenstaufen princes learned in their new Sicilian realm that business-like administration which Norman had there been taught by Saracen, that they first brought system into the custody of the imperial documents.² Yet rude enough it must still have been, for when, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, the Emperor Henry VII. made his fatal coronation-journey into Italy, the archives not only journeyed with him, but, left stranded there by his death, may still be found, in great part, at Pisa and Turin.³ Nor is there reason, from what is left, to suppose that they contained aught older than the just preceding days of Rudolf of Habsburg. It was a century later when, under Kaiser Sigismund, it was at last established that an Emperor's archives pass to his successor in office, even when not his heir by blood; and only from the year 1422 can one speak of the archives of the Empire as a stable institution. As a *group* of institutions let me rather say; for, though the Imperial Court-Archives (*Reichshofarchiv*) came to rest with the Habsburgs at Vienna, one must almost to our day seek those of the Archchancery (*Reichskanzlei*), at Mainz, those of the Supreme Court of Justice (*Reichskammergericht*), at Wetzlar, those of the Diets at Ratisbon; and the two last-named collections are still at large.⁴

Ambulant, too, till late in the twelfth century were whatever of archives belonged to the kings of France. It was only when, in 1194, at Fréteval, Philip Augustus had the chagrin to leave his archives, with the rest of his baggage, in the victorious hands of Richard of England, that he had the good sense to quit the itinerant system and to establish at Paris that *Trésor des Chartes*, out of which

¹"*In archivis imperii*," 1146. See Bresslau, I. pp. 134-137. Cf. also F. v. Löher, *Archivlehre*, pp. 58-61.

²Bresslau, I. p. 135.

³Löher, p. 94; Bresslau, pp. 140-142.

⁴Those of the *Reichskanzlei* are now for the most part at Vienna. Of those of the *Reichskammergericht* only so much as relates to the old Empire in general, to the lands now Prussian, and to the lost outlying provinces (like Switzerland and the Low Countries) still remains at Wetzlar; what concerned the other German states or their citizens has since 1845 been distributed to their local archives. See Löher, pp. 187, 196.

have grown in our day the French national archives. True, for two or three centuries prior to the Revolution it received almost no accessions, the ministers of the state seeming to count the official papers of their bureaus as private property, to be dispersed or appropriated at their pleasure ; but when, with the Revolution, there fell both the Old Régime and the Church, there could be drawn together at Paris from all France, not only such administrative and judicial papers as had survived, but almost all the ecclesiastical and baronial archives of the realm. It is this mass, or rather so much of it as was spared by the Revolutionary vandalism and by the sifting prescribed by the Convention, which, now merged with the ancient archives of the crown, forms the wealth of the Archives Nationales.¹

And even the public records of England, which in age as in fullness surpass all others in Europe, begin but a little earlier. They too date, in orderly sequence, only from the early twelfth century.²

But the example thus set by the greatest secular authorities was eagerly followed by the lesser. The Bavarian archives, to-day the oldest and richest in Germany, were in order before the Empire's.³ In the course of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries not only all leading governments and princely houses, but even the pettier feudal lords and the rising towns as well, had begun to hoard their records ; and by the fourteenth even the burgher families and the notaries had caught the infection. From this time forth, archives multiplied apace, and slowly took on system and thoroughness. The scribbling sixteenth century brought them to their full activity, which not even the turmoil and ravage of the seventeenth could seriously interrupt. In 1770 there are known to have been, in Paris alone, no less than 405 treasuries of archives ; and the number in all France at the end of the ancient régime is reckoned by Arthur Giry at more than 10,000.⁴ Nor is there reason to suppose that the rest of Europe fell behind.

It was the task of the nineteenth century, with its absorption of small states, its secularization of convents, its apotheosis of nationality, its scientific spirit, to gather into great central archives this wealth of documents and to make it accessible to historians. Yet

¹ For all this see H. Bordier, *Les Archives de la France* (Paris, 1855), and for an admirable briefer sketch, brought down to the present, Giry's article "Archives" in the *Grande Encyclopédie*.

² S. R. Scargill-Bird, *Guide to the Documents in the Public Record Office* (London, 1891), p. iii.

³ Their beginnings, or at least the beginnings of their consecutive contents, belong to the early thirteenth century (Bresslau, p. 149). January 1204 is the date of the first document of the *Monumenta Wittelsbacensia*.

⁴ *Grande Encyclopédie*, article "Archives."

neither the one nor the other has been accomplished to such an extent as is often supposed. The great attempt of Napoleon, in 1810, to centralize at Paris all the archives of Europe was brought to naught, in 1814, by that dreamer's fall; and the thousands of wagon-loads which had come trundling over Pyrenees and Alps and Rhine, from Simancas, from Turin, from Rome, from Vienna, from Holland, went trundling back again, not without some dropping of their treasures in the mud.¹ In most European lands not even the archives of the state, though now for the most part under a single control, are gathered into a single repository. Even in England it is only within the last half century that the public records as a whole have been put in the care of the national archivist—quaintly called the Master of the Rolls—and their more important deposits drawn together within the spacious halls of the new Record Office. Of the almost countless lesser collections there is not yet even an inventory, save as one can glean it from the reports of the Historical Manuscripts Commission.

In Prussia, and yet more in Austro-Hungary, the several provincial archives maintain their integrity against those of the dynastic capital. Even in Bavaria, it is only the documents of earlier date than the fifteenth century that are centralized at Munich; though the admirable system by which papers may be transferred at wish between the provincial archives and the capital makes this scarcely a hindrance to research. And if, in the Netherlands, the Rijksarchief at the Hague has, to the great convenience of American scholars, succeeded in adding to its other wealth the vast commercial records of the two great trading corporations—the Dutch East India Company and the Dutch West India Company—which so long shaped or shared the fortunes of Orient and Occident (nay, has now at last drawn into the same complex of buildings the rich private archives of the House of Orange), in Spain, not less important to the transatlantic student, not only do the archives of Aragon and of Navarre remain at Barcelona or at Pampeluna, but those of

¹ A classed table of these foreign archives gathered at Paris by Napoleon is printed at the end of H. Bordier's *Les Archives de la France* (Paris, 1855). Interesting details both as to the seizure and as to the return of the German archives may be found in an article by H. Schlitter on "Die Zurückstellung der von den Franzosen im Jahre 1809 aus Wien entführten Archive, Bibliotheken und Kunstsammlungen," in the *Mittheilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung* for 1901 (Bd. XXII., pp. 108-122). I have in my keeping, at Cornell University, a manuscript which is known to have belonged to the library of a famous German city at the end of the eighteenth century, and which probably, carried off by the French, fell into the mud from their overloaded wagons, as others are known to have done. Such, at least, is the conjecture of the present librarian-archivist of the town; and it squares well with the appearance of the manuscript and with all I know of its history.

Castile (whose alone was the monopoly of the Indies) are divided between Simancas and Alcalá, while at Seville, so long the one port of entry for the Indian trade, are still the archives of the Indies, and at Madrid the deposits of more modern bureaux, such as the (to us) important Hydrographic Depository. As for the lesser archives throughout Europe—archives of towns, families, corporations, churches, orders, individuals—they are, of course, still legion.¹

It had been my thought to tell you something in detail of the contents and organization of at least two or three of the great national archives. But my time is already waning; and, without so much as a glance at the literature of the subject,² let me rather offer you a few suggestions as to how European archives may be used.³ There are at least four ways: 1. One may go to the archives in person. To the student of leisure and training this is doubtless the most tempting course: but it has its own difficulties and drawbacks. One needs, in the first place, or may need, an introduction. Let

¹ The best idea of their multiplicity and variety may perhaps be gained from the book of Langlois and Stein, *Les Archives de l'Histoire de France* (Paris, 1891). This work, though it seeks only to point out in what collections, in France or abroad, material may be found for the study of the history of France, is at present the best guide to the archives of Europe as a whole. It even has something to tell of those of Africa, Asia, America, and the Indies. To the archives of German lands (not only the German Empire, but Austria-Hungary, Switzerland, Luxemburg, and the Baltic Provinces as well) C. A. H. Burkhardt's *Hand- und Adressbuch der deutsch-n Archive* (2d ed., Leipzig, 1887), though its descriptive notes are of the briefest, is a useful directory. Excellent brief surveys of the archives of Spain, of Holland, of Sweden, of Roumania, are to be found in the too short-lived *Revue Internationale des Archives* (Paris, 1895-1896). Suggestion of further literature may be sought in Gir'y's *Manuel de Diplomatie* (Paris, 1894), pp. 37-40, and at the end of his article in the *Grande Encyclopédie*; and especially in the article on "La Science des Archives," prefaced by Langlois to the *Revue Internationale des Archives*, just mentioned. For Great Britain, for Russia for Italy, for Spain, for Belgium, there is nowhere accessible so much as a complete list of the archives. Of high value, however, for British archives are of course the reports of the Historical Manuscripts Commissions.

² I may be allowed to mention in a foot-note that of the contents of the Archives Nationales of France there is a good single-volume printed inventory, the *État Sommaire par Séries des Documents Conservés aux Archives Nationales* (Paris, 1891). To these, too, the book of Bordier is mainly devoted, and there is an excellent brief analysis in Gir'y's article in the *Grande Encyclopédie*. To the wealth of the English Public Record Office the best key is now the *Guide* of Scargill-Bird (London, 1891). Here is hardly the place to mention the great series of *Calendars of State Papers*, through which such vast bodies of documents in English archives and of documents in foreign archives bearing on English history are becoming accessible to scholars. On the archives of Venice, so important for all Europe during the earlier modern centuries, we have the entertaining volume of A. Baschet, *Les Archives de Venise* (Paris, 1870). For the Vatican archives let me again point out the worth of Professor Haskins's study.

³ For help in their use there are many handbooks, such as, for England, R. Sims's *Manual for the Genealogist, Topographer, Antiquary, and Legal Professor* (new ed., London, 1888), and W. Rye's *Records and Record Searching* (2d ed., London, 1897). I have found especially suggestive the little *Leitfaden für Archivbenutzer* of Dr. Max Bär (Leipzig, 1896).

not the sensitive vanity of the scholar rebel at this. Archives are not libraries. Their volumes have no duplicates, and, once lost, are gone forever. Nowhere is a marauder's task so easy as among their loose papers, and nowhere are his temptations so great—a fortune, a reputation, a policy, may hang on the fate of a single paper. To-day all the public archives of Europe, Constantinople's alone excepted, lie open to the accredited scholar; but very few, like the English Record Office and the French Archives Nationales, admit all comers. One may, of course, introduce oneself, especially if one hold any academic or official station, by writing to the archives beforehand of one's visit; and usually, I think, such a letter will in any case be adequate introduction. Even in the case of open archives, such an advance application is desirable; and by many, as those of Germany, it is strictly required.¹ The materials one wishes to use may be for the moment out of reach or may need hunting up. The archivist or sub-archivist in charge of them may be out of town. The public research-room in most archives is but small, and unannounced guests may embarrass. Write beforehand. I speak with emphasis, for I have myself been a sinner, and have paid the penalty of delay. And in your application state with all the definiteness possible what you wish to investigate, taking care (especially for the German archives) not to make your subject too broad.² Have a care, too, in choosing the time for your visit.

¹ See, for the requirements usual in German archives, Bär, *Leitfaden*, pp. 15-19; Holtzinger, *Katechismus der Registratur- und Archivkunde* (Leipzig, 1883), pp. 130-134. "Archive sind noch immer keine Bibliothek," writes even the helpful Franz von Löher, so long the head of the Bavarian archives; "nicht jedermann erhält Zutritt, sondern nur, wer Vertrauen verdient, und den Arbeiten der Archivbeamten nicht hinderlich fällt. Der echt wissenschaftliche Forscher wird anders bedient, als ein ewig fordernder und fragender Dilettant, und es giebt ein anerkannt ehrenwerter Charakter festere Gewähr gegen Missbrauch, als der erste beste Unbekannte." (*Archivlehre*, p. 260.)

² No matter how well introduced or how specific in one's appeal, one must not be too sure of seeing the documents he seeks. A decade or two ago, while engaged in research in western Germany, I found myself in a Rhenish city, one of the homes of the Prussian archives. It had been suggested to me by the archivist of a neighboring city that I might find here certain papers of value to my quest. I made bold to call upon the archivist, who, receiving me most kindly, told me of documents which might prove of use; but he added that he could lay them before me only when I had gained permission from the Director-General of the Archives, in Berlin—the great historian, Heinrich von Sybel. Happily I was equipped with a personal letter to Dr. von Sybel from his friend and my own, a scholar who had shortly before been our minister at Berlin and who is now again our ambassador at the German court. I enclosed it to him, with my plea, asking to examine any documents which might be found in these provincial archives touching a specified subject. In due time his answer came: a curt half-page informing me that no document on this subject existed in the Prussian archives. Perhaps the great historian felt only contempt for a student still interested in the history of the witch-persecution; perhaps he lacked faith in the seriousness of an American scholar. I think it more likely that I had come up against that principle of German archive-administration which forbids

Many archives, especially the smaller ones and those of the Church, have long and frequent holidays. Thus, at the Vatican, what with Christmas, Carnival, Easter, and the long summer vacation, in addition to the single feast-days, the working days (as Professor Haskins has told us) are less than half those of the year. Remember, too, that the archive working day is short—sometimes only three or four hours. This is the more serious because the use of the archives is not always cost-free.

Only of late years and in the great public archives has it become wholly free; and there are still archives of state, like those of Bavaria and Mecklenburg, where, while no charge is made for research in the interest of science, a fee must be paid for private investigations, like those of the genealogist or the lawyer. Even where no fee is paid, one must not forget that archives are as yet seldom endowed for the public; that the scholar is a guest, entitled only to courtesy; and that for service rendered he owes both gratitude and wherever possible a more substantial recognition. It behooves one, then, to make the most of his archive-time; and all possible should be done beforehand to orient oneself as to one's field of research and as to the resources of the archives. And when at last one is seated at the archive-table, documents before him, his trouble may be but begun. They must be read, analyzed, interpreted. Even the European scripts of our own time are not to be scanned with ease by one who has but read in print the tongues in which they are written; and with every century backward the puzzle grows.¹ True, at one's elbow, in all the greater archives, are trained archivists ready to help with every doubtful reading, obscure allusion, ambiguous date; but they cannot undertake to

to the public all documents touching the good fame of living persons or of their families. Even in Italy, the papers of criminal trials may not be seen till seventy years are gone. Be the explanation what it may, I had opportunity a few months later to learn a differing attitude. Being in Paris, I presented myself at the National Archives, and, with no credential but my visiting card, asked for documents upon the same subject. I was shown into a study room, and they were brought me at once. If the other course was hesitant, surely this was rash. This difference in administrative temper was well pointed out a quarter century ago by the German historian Baumgarten ("Archive und Bibliotheken in Frankreich und Deutschland," in the *Preussische Jahrbücher* for 1875), taking his text from the reply of the great Belgian archivist-in-chief, Gachard, to his question by what steps he could gain access to certain documents in the archives at Brussels: "Tout cela, Monsieur, sera mis à votre disposition sans que vous ayez à faire aucune démarche ni aucune demande: nos Archives sont ouvertes à tout le monde, mais plus particulièrement aux hommes distingués qui veulent venir les consulter dans l'intérêt de travaux historiques." Yet it is precisely the German archives which go furthest in the lending of documents and in their transfer from place to place for the use of scholars.

¹ I have seen an American family on its travels present itself at the Dutch archives in search of records of which its members could read neither handwriting nor language.

teach the elements of palæography and diplomatics. With such aids now available in English as Thompson's *Handbook*¹ and Trice Martin's *Record Interpreter*,² no enterprising student need long fear ancient script; and, if he have but French enough for Girys's manual,³ he may soon grapple with charters and chronology. But he must not waste good archive-time in the study. Nor does he need to do so, for

2. One may use the archives by deputy. Of course, the deputy, too, needs accrediting; and, if he prove untrained, he must not hope for the patient help shown to one on his own errand. Why not send one who is trained? Haunting all great archives are experts who live by such research.⁴ Where possible, it is best to let the archivists themselves choose for you. You are in less danger of being victimized by a trickster or an incapable, or of hitting on one who is *persona non grata* among the documents. Best of all is it, in general, if you can win for your task an archivist himself in his off hours.

3. One can use the archives by means of transcripts. Nearly all great archives furnish such on request or are ready to name competent transcribers. One need not tremble for the expense, for in the greater archives it is usually fixed by law and named in their published and posted rules; and it is often astonishingly moderate. Certified transcripts, *i. e.*, those whose accuracy is guaranteed by the seal of the archives and the certificate of the archivist, cost much more; but, save for use as legal evidence in courts of law, they are hardly to be wished. Of course, if one is to order transcripts, one must know precisely what one wants. One may get clues from the earlier scholars who have investigated one's theme. General works, like Oesterley's *Wegweiser*⁵ and the *Archives de l'Histoire de France* of Langlois and Stein, will be of great help within their own fields. Above all, the analyses and inventories of the archives themselves must be ransacked, so far as they can be found in

¹ *Handbook of Greek and Latin Palæography* (London and New York, 1893), by Edward Maunde Thompson.

² *The Record Interpreter* (London, 1892), by Charles Trice Martin.

³ *Manuel de Diplomatique* (Paris, 1894).

⁴ Walter Rye, in his *Records and Record Searching* (p. 124), names a dozen such at London. At the Hague I found thus constantly busied for English scholars that admirable worker Mr. W. G. Van Oyen. Though now himself an archivist, he has not been too busy to be of much aid to me, and he may be able to attend to the errands of others.

⁵ *Wegweiser durch die Literatur der Urkundensammlungen* (Berlin, 1885-1886), 2 vols. An index by places to all the European documents printed or mentioned by historians. Invaluable, despite very grave incompleteness.

print.¹ And, at the best, one can hardly hope thus to find matter not already familiar to the historians. Yet the greatest of American medievalists, perhaps the most fruitful of living American historians, Mr. Lea, has never worked a day in European archives: all his materials have been transcribed for him.

4. Last and as yet least of all, one may use the archives by loan. Save in Germany, where scholars are sometimes allowed great privileges of this sort, one must be a great personage indeed to have archive-documents intrusted to one's own custody; and, remembering such mishaps as the burning of Mommsen's library, we may all well hope that the exceptions may be few. But the lending from archives to archives for the more convenient use of scholars, even as now in America we lend from library to library, is more common. I have spoken of this use among the Bavarian archives; and the Prussian are yet more generous, not restricting this courtesy to those of Prussia. In France the plan has at least been suggested.² Of its use in other lands I know little. However it grow, such treasures are hardly likely to cross the Atlantic.

In conclusion I have only to add that even from that period, from the twelfth century to the eighteenth, where European archives are of most value to historians, great bodies of documents may also be found in the libraries.

GEORGE LINCOLN BURR.

¹ In the German archives one may not hope to see a catalogue, not even a manuscript one. "Die Vorlegung der Repertorien des Archivs," runs the Prussian statute, "findet ausseramtlich niemals und an niemand statt." "The reason for this," explains Franz von Löher (p. 275), "is that the catalogues are the keys to the archives, and as long as archive-secrecy exists, so long must it especially include the catalogues." So much the more must the searcher know beforehand what to seek.

² By Langlois, in the *Archives de l'Histoire de France* (p. xvi, note), and in the *Revue Internationale des Archives* (p. 16).